



WEEK 2 - DESERTS OVERVIEW

Throughout Scripture, the imagery of deserts or the wilderness is a crucial literary theme to capture the idea of being tested or finding oneself far from the life-giving presence of God. In a way, deserts and wildernesses in the Bible are the direct opposite of the imagery of mountains, where humans go to meet the divine. When biblical characters are in the wilderness, they are pushed to the limits to see how deep their trust in God goes. However, alongside this theme is another which can be a source of tremendous encouragement when we find ourselves in our *own* deserts: God transforms the wilderness. He provides food when we are hungry (such as manna for the Israelites), his Spirit goes with us in the wilderness (such as when Jesus was tested there), and he even promises to change the deserted wilderness into a paradise of life! “The deserts will become as green as the mountains of Lebanon” (Isaiah 35:2). When taken as a whole, this theme invites us all to consider this important question: When I find myself in the deserts of my own life, how much do I depend on God to see me through?

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days.

Luke 4:1-2

Bible Project Video: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/the-wilderness/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you hear the word “wilderness”, what images or emotions come to mind?
2. Why do you think God so often uses the wilderness in Scripture to shape His people rather than lead them directly to the destination?
3. Read Exodus 15:22-27, Exodus 16, and Deuteronomy 8:2-3. What do these passages reveal about God’s purpose for allowing Israel to experience hunger, thirst, and uncertainty?
4. What did Israel’s responses to hardship reveal about what was in their hearts?
5. Read Matthew 4:1-11. What can we learn from Jesus about resisting temptation and trusting God’s Word during difficult seasons?
6. During difficult seasons, what are you most tempted to question about God?
7. Why is waiting often one of the hardest parts of the wilderness?
8. What spiritual disciplines help you trust God when you can’t see what He’s doing?
9. What would it look like to choose trust instead of grumbling this week?